

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 818

By Yarbrow

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Reverend Dr. Michael Williams of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Reverend Dr. Michael Williams, a preacher, writer, poet, storyteller, playwright, and teacher who was beloved throughout the community; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Williams served as a pastor in several churches in the Nashville area, most recently West End United Methodist Church, before retiring last year; and

WHEREAS, renowned for his gentleness and kindness, Reverend Dr. Williams was a man of compassion and empathy who worked tirelessly to realize his vision of a caring and just world; and

WHEREAS, he was a fierce advocate for the poor and oppressed and a true lover of humanity, both in general and in particular, for he had many friends; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Williams was a unique preacher, one who combined eclectic elements in his sermons to spread the gospel of Christ's unconditional love, mercy, and inclusion; his message invariably centered on there being room for everyone; and

WHEREAS, he eloquently talked the talk, but he also walked the walk by feeding the hungry, working on behalf of the disadvantaged and the marginalized, and loving everyone with whom he came in contact; and

WHEREAS, that rare combination of loquacious talker and attentive listener, Reverend Dr. Williams was an inspirational mentor to many and a dear friend to many others; and

WHEREAS, a native of Murray, Kentucky, Michael Williams was a graduate of Vanderbilt University, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Northwestern University; he was proud of his country heritage and a fervent defender of Appalachian culture and the dignity of its residents; and

WHEREAS, a gifted storyteller, Reverend Dr. Williams had been the featured storyteller at Jonesborough, won the liar's contest at Mule Day in Columbia, and served as the Storyteller in Residence at Martin Methodist College after his retirement; and

WHEREAS, Michael Williams authored several books about preaching and storytelling and was a published poet; a collection of his poems received the prestigious Academy of American Poets Prize while he was a student at Northwestern; and

WHEREAS, in the last few years, he had returned to his early love of poetry, publishing two chapbooks and performing public readings; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Williams is survived by his beloved wife, Margaret, and his cherished daughters, Sarah and Lizzy, and Sarah's fiancé, Sean; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Michael Williams leaves behind a legacy of kindness, compassion, and integrity, and is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember this remarkable preacher and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Reverend Dr. Michael Williams, reflecting fondly upon his life of purpose and commitment and his enduring message of love, mercy, and inclusion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family and many friends of Reverend Dr. Williams.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.